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United Nations Decade of International Law

Draft resolution submitted by the Chairperson of the Working Group on the United Nations Decade of International Law

United Nations Decade of International Law

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 44/23 of 17 November 1989, by which it declared the period 1990-1999 the United Nations Decade of International Law,

Recalling also that the main purposes of the Decade, according to its resolution 44/23, should be, *inter alia*:

(a) To promote acceptance of and respect for the principles of international law,

(b) To promote means and methods for the peaceful settlement of disputes between States, including resort to and full respect for the International Court of Justice,

(c) To encourage the progressive development of international law and its codification,

(d) To encourage the teaching, study, dissemination and wider appreciation of international law,

Noting the conclusion of the United Nations Decade of International Law,

Reaffirming its resolution 53/101 of 8 December 1998, entitled "Principles and guidelines for international negotiations", adopted within the framework of the Decade,

Greatly encouraged by the significant achievements in the development and promotion of international law which occurred during the Decade, which has contributed to the strengthening of the rule of international law,

Recognizing that the establishment of the International Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and for Rwanda in 1993 and 1994, respectively, the establishment of the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea in 1996 and the adoption of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in 1998 constitute significant events within the Decade,

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Recognizing also efforts made during the Decade by Legal Advisers of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs worldwide to create a common understanding of their role through annual informal consultations at the Headquarters of the United Nations,

Convinced that the end of the Decade affords the international community an opportunity to reflect on those achievements and that States, international organizations and educational institutions should continue to encourage and promote activities in the legal field aimed at contributing to its main purposes,

Convinced also of the need to continue aiming towards the implementation of the main purposes of the Decade,

Welcoming the significant increase in the recourse to the International Court of Justice by States for the settlement of disputes,

Noting that international humanitarian law has been an important topic during the United Nations Decade of International Law, and mindful of the contributions made in this field by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement Conferences,

Noting also that the year 1999 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949,

Expressing its appreciation to the Governments of the Russian Federation and the Kingdom of the Netherlands for their efforts in realization of the programme of action dedicated to the centennial of the first International Peace Conference which could be regarded as a significant contribution to the United Nations Decade of International Law,

Taking note with interest of the consideration of the outcome of the actions dedicated to the 1999 centennial of the first International Peace Conference in the plenary meeting of the General Assembly held during its fifty-fourth regular session,

Expressing its gratitude to the rapporteurs and all organizations, groups and individuals who contributed to the discussion of the centennial themes,

Having considered the report of the Secretary-General,[1] and expressing its appreciation therefor,

Noting the deposit by the Secretary-General, on 21 December 1998, of an act of formal confirmation, on behalf of the United Nations, of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties between States and International Organizations or between International Organizations of 21 March 1986,

Welcoming the progress that has been made towards eliminating the backlog in the publication of the United Nations *Treaty Series* by the implementation of a plan to be completed in 2001, and stressing the need for the elimination of such a backlog, as well as for a comprehensive electronification of the work of the Treaty Section of the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat,

Recalling that, at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, the Sixth Committee established the Working Group on the United Nations Decade of International Law,

Noting that the Working Group continued its work during the fifty-fourth session in accordance with resolution 53/100,

Having considered the oral report of the Chairperson of the Working Group to the Sixth Committee,

[1] A/54/362 and Add.1.

1. *Expresses its appreciation* for the work done by the Working Group on the United Nations Decade of International Law;

2. *Acknowledges* that the Decade has contributed significantly to the strengthening of the rule of international law;

3. *Reaffirms* the continued validity of the main objectives of the Decade, the fulfilment of which is essential to achieve the purposes of the United Nations;

4. *Expresses its appreciation* to States and international organizations and institutions that have undertaken activities in the implementation of the programme for the activities for the final term (1997-1999) of the Decade;

5. *Requests* the Secretary-General to continue developing the Treaty Section electronic database, with a view to providing Member States expeditiously with a wider range of easily accessible treaty-related information on the electronic medium, and to keep the list, now available on the Internet, of the titles of the multilateral treaties deposited with him updated in all official languages of the Organization;

6. *Urges* States and international organizations, in particular depositaries, to continue assisting the Secretariat of the United Nations in its efforts to expedite the registration of treaties and their publication by providing it with paper copies of treaties, or electronic copies, including maps, for registration and, wherever possible, translations of treaties in English or French;

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to implement vigorously the plan to eliminate the backlog in the publication of the United Nations *Treaty Series*, and highlights, in this context, the relevance of timely translations;

8. *Expresses its appreciation* to the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat for the establishment during the Decade of various Internet Web sites and the United Nations Audiovisual Library in International Law, and takes note of its efforts to maintain those sites and the Library;

9. *Notes* the publication by the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat of the *Collection of Essays by Legal Advisers of States, Legal Advisers of International Organizations and Practitioners in the Field of International Law* and its intention to issue in 2000 two publications entitled *International Instruments related to the Prevention and Suppression of International Terrorism* and *The United Nations and the Development of International Law during the 1990s* to highlight the work accomplished in this area during the Decade;

10. *Invites* States, organs of the United Nations, international organizations and other relevant international forums to continue to give attention to the themes and outcome of the centennial of the first International Peace Conference;

11. *Congratulates* the Permanent Court of Arbitration on its one hundredth anniversary, commends that organization for its role in the international system of peaceful dispute resolution, and invites States to consider making full use of the facilities of the Court and to support its work;[2]

12. *Expresses its appreciation* to the International Committee of the Red Cross for the activities undertaken in the field of international humanitarian law, including with regard to the protection of the environment in times of armed conflict;

[2] A/54/381, annex, para. 9.

13. *Invites* States and international organizations to continue promoting the acceptance of and respect for the rules and principles of international law;

14. *Welcomes* the achievements during the Decade in the codification and progressive development of international law, and calls upon States, in order to contribute further to the rule of international law, to consider, if they have not yet done so, becoming parties to the multilateral treaties adopted during the Decade, including those listed in the annex to the report of the Secretary-General;[1]

15. *Invites* States and international organizations to continue promoting the strengthening of the use of means and methods of peaceful settlement disputes;

16. *Invites* States to continue to pay attention to the identification of areas of international law that might be ripe for progressive development or codification, and to promote discussion thereon in the competent forums;

17. *Invites* States and international organizations to continue encouraging the publication of books or other materials on subjects of international law and the holding of symposia, conferences, seminars or other meetings aimed at promoting a wider appreciation of international law;

18. *Invites* States to continue encouraging educational institutions to introduce or increase the number of courses of international law;

19. *Requests* the Secretary-General to bring the present resolution to the attention of States, international organizations and institutions working in the field of international law;

20. *Decides* to continue considering developments in the progress made in the implementation of the purposes of the Decade beyond its conclusion, in the framework of the agenda item entitled "United Nations Programme of Assistance in the Teaching, Study, Dissemination and Wider Appreciation of International Law".